

Washington, DC - Rep. Peter Welch issued the following statement in response to today's congressional testimony- which Welch attended- from General David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker on the status of the war in Iraq. Last week, the nonpartisan Government Accountability Office (GAO) report confirmed that Iraq has failed to meet all but three of eighteen critical benchmarks:

"Iraq is in the middle of a civil war that cannot be resolved by the United States military. The uneven progress reported by General Petraeus is tactical progress in service of what is the President's failed military policy. While our soldiers have bravely and characteristically done the job they have been asked to do, they cannot continue to referee a civil war or bring about the political and economic reforms necessary for stability in Iraq.

"Just last week the nonpartisan GAO reported that the Iraqi government has failed to deliver on nearly every benchmark of success put forth by President Bush. The Iraqi Parliament has not passed needed legislation to promote Sunni-Shiite reconciliation, Iraqi security forces remain dominated by sectarian militias, and reconstruction funds are still sitting idle in Iraqi bank accounts.

"It is long past time to end this war and bring our troops home. Regrettably, the President continues to cling stubbornly to his failed policy and appears intent on running out the clock on his presidency rather than admitting the need for a change in course. Congress must use the power of the purse to force a change of policy and end this war."